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Soon the Christmas tree was standing up again as it had in the grove (*see p. 62*)

A Chinese Christmas Tree

BY

NORMAN HINSDALE PITMAN

AUTHOR OF

"THE LADY ELECT," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

LIU HSING-P'U

NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Lo-lo and Ta-ta	11
How Lo-lo Got Sick	14
The Foreign Doctor	20
Foreign Medicine	25
Lo-lo's Wish	29
Making Plans	32
At School	37
Lo-lo Excited	45
The Nodding Tiger	49
Ta-ta's Accident	53
Cutting the Tree	60
Setting up the Tree	64
Christmas Eve	68
Christmas Morning	72
The Silver Watch	79

ILLUSTRATIONS

Opposite Page

SOON THE CHRISTMAS TREE WAS STANDING UP AGAIN AS IT HAD IN THE GROVE . . *Frontispiece*

LO-LO ASKED HER FOR A STORY 10

BEING SICK WAS BETTER THAN SEEING THE GREAT DRAGON 19

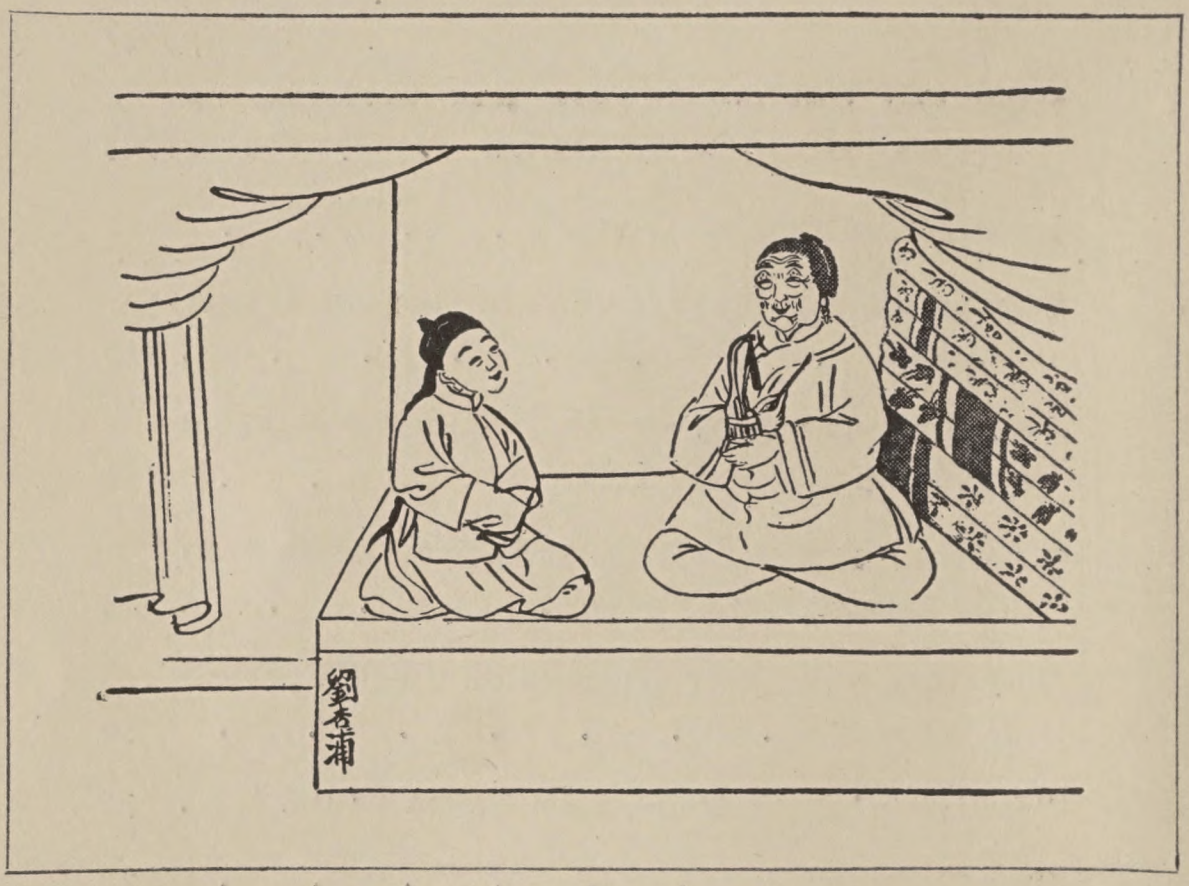
THE SHUTTLECOCK BALL WAS MADE OF SNAKE'S SKIN AND WAS VERY HARD 36

IN A HIGH-PITCHED VOICE HE WENT THROUGH TO THE END OF THE LESSON 44

THE SUN WAS JUST SETTING AS THEY STARTED HOME 59

"LISTEN! LITTLE ONES, I AM SANTA CLAUS" . 71

THE GOOD-BYE 78



Lo-lo asked her for a story

I

LO-LO AND TA-TA

"YES, and it was a real sure-enough tree," said Lo-Lo, "and there were different kinds of pretty things hanging on the branches, enough for all the children in the village. Grandma said she saw it with her own eyes."

"But what did those foreign children want with a tree? Why didn't they put all those things on the table or on the bed?" asked Ta-ta, his eyes big with wonder.

The two boys were sitting on a big brick bed in Lo-lo's house. It had been more than three years since the time when they were lost in the wheat field, and they felt much older now and wiser. Another change had taken place. Lo-lo was no longer a poor boy. The family had moved out of the little one-room house into a big stone dwelling with many rooms and ever so many queer little courts and out-houses. There were several servants too and a horse, and a two-wheeled cart. But although Lo-lo was rich and Ta-ta poor, they were still as good friends as ever.

"Why, you see," said Lo-lo, answering Ta-ta's question, "these children from over the ocean never do things the same way we do. Papa says when they go out skating they have skates on both feet instead of only one."

"My! what fun it would be to see them."

"Yes, and everything else they do is queer. So it isn't so strange after all if they bring a real tree into the house and put presents on it."

"No indeed," replied Ta-ta, "I think that would be lots of fun."

"Yes, and—but here's papa. I hear him talking to old Wu."

Lo-lo's father entered and Lo-lo got down on his knees and bowed his head to the floor. It was the first time he had seen his father since morning and he had been taught to be very polite to his elders.

"Well, my son, what were you and Ta-ta talking about when I came in? I doubt if it was about your lessons."

"Oh, no, it wasn't about our books, but about the little foreign children and their funny ways."

"Why, what do you know about foreign children?" his father asked, laughing. "Have you been reading about them in your book?"

"Oh, no, it's what grandma told us about

when she was little, about seeing them take a tree into the house in the winter time, and about their putting presents on it for all their friends."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said the father, laughing again in spite of himself.

"But we want to go and see a tree like that, and sing songs together," pleaded Lo-lo. "Why is it nonsense if you have nice things to eat and toys?"

"What! go among the foreigners? Not you. Don't you know about those people from over the sea? They are not like us. No indeed. You'll surely come to grief if you go running after them."

"Yes, but I want to," pouted Lo-lo. "Grandma said she did when she was little, and she's never come to grief. She's almost sixty now and has never even had a toothache in all her life."

"That's true," replied Mr. Chang, "but you must remember you are not your grandma, and what's more, you never will be."

II

HOW LO-LO GOT SICK

NEXT day Lo-lo, Ta-ta, and many other boys were skating on the little pond in front of the schoolhouse. Each boy had a small piece of smooth hard wood under one foot, while with the other foot he pushed himself along. Faster and faster they went skimming over the ice.

Once Ta-ta's foot slipped off the wooden skate and he went tumbling head over heels. Thud! went his head on the hard ice. All the other children laughed and shouted in their glee. "See! he's trying to skate on his head," they cried. "Hey! Ta-ta, better get up or you'll freeze to the pond."

Then they played games and were having the best kind of time when, all of a sudden, no one knew just how it happened, there came a loud cracking sound, and four of the children found themselves in the water. All scrambled out quickly except Lo-lo. He reached the shore, dripping wet and shivering with cold.

"See! Lo-lo's crazier than Ta-ta. He tries to swim in the winter time," shouted one boy who had escaped without a wetting.

Lo-lo felt like crying, but he kept back the tears.

"Huh!" he answered, "didn't you ever get ice water on you? Why, my grandma says the foreign children drink it instead of tea."

But very soon Lo-lo's teeth began to chatter and he had to run home as fast as his legs would carry him. He didn't like to worry his mother about his troubles, so he climbed up on the warm bed and said nothing about the accident. Below, the fire was burning brightly. The bed was very comfortable and he soon forgot his wet clothes.

Supper time came and went. Then, sitting up close to his grandmother, Lo-lo asked her for a story. In response to this the old lady began:

"Once there was a very bad boy. He was so bad that no one loved him but his mother. Of course she was very fond of him, and, I am glad to say that, bad as he was, he loved her very much and tried to be good to her.

"One night after he had grown to be a young man he did not come home to his supper. At first his mother did not worry about him, for they were very poor and he would not lose much if he missed his supper. Then, too, there were several places where she thought he might be. Bed time came and still her

son did not return. The poor woman lay awake all night wondering what could have happened to her boy. She was afraid that he had been doing some mischief and perhaps had got into trouble over it.

"At last she heard a step outside, and soon the door was pushed open.

" 'See what I have, mother,' cried the son, entering. He held up a big iron kettle—the kind old Wu uses for cooking rice.

"His mother knew well enough that he had stolen it, and she gave him a good scolding. 'Don't you know that those poor people can't get on without a kettle? How will they cook their millet? Oh, my boy, my boy, why did you steal it? Don't you know better than to be a common thief?'

" 'But, mother, I can sell it and get money. We are poor. Yesterday we had nothing to eat but yellow millet. To-day we shall have good rice.'

" 'Not a mouthful of your rice will I taste, for it would be bitter to the taste and would turn sour in my stomach. No stolen food for me.'

" 'But what shall I do with the kettle, mother, now that I have it?'

" 'Take it back.'

"'It is already daylight. They would be sure to catch me and beat me for stealing.'

"'Listen, my son, if you will take the kettle back, I feel sure that the sky will grow dark enough so that you will not be seen.'

"Now, as I told you, the boy loved his mother. So he took the kettle back to the house from which he had stolen it."

"And did the sky grow dark?" questioned Lo-lo, breathlessly.

"Yes indeed, the sun was darkened by a great shadow. The boy dropped the kettle over the wall and started back full tilt for home without being seen once by the people he feared would catch him."

"But what made the sun grow dark?" asked Lo-lo.

"Oh, that's too long a story to tell now, little one," she said, smiling. "Some people say that the sun and the moon were running around a hill, one from one side and one from the other. First thing they knew, they had butted their heads into each other, smash! And then the whole world was dark for an hour."

"Do you know what happened to the boy?"

"Yes, they say that long afterwards he was made the God of Thieves and went away up into the sky to live. Now if people want to

grow rich, traders and others, they go out-of-doors on his birthday and worship him."

"Is that the way papa made his money?" asked the boy gravely, looking up into the old woman's face.

"You'd better ask your father about that, Lo-lo. He knows better than his mother." Her eyes twinkled, and he thought she was going to laugh.

Just then the boy began to cough, and his grandmother discovered that his clothes were damp. Soon she found out all that had happened at the pond.

"Better go to bed at once," she told him. "Get off these wet things, else you'll catch your death."

"Nonsense, mother," said Mr. Chang, who had come in just in time to hear her last words to Lo-lo. "Nonsense! Don't you know the old saying is, 'If you wish your children to have a quiet life, let them always be a little hungry and a little cold.' "

"That wasn't what I thought when you were a boy," answered Grandmother Chang, "and I don't believe it's true now."

But Lo-lo went to bed willingly. He always obeyed his grandmother, for wasn't she the mother of his own father, and don't mothers always know more than their sons?

Being sick was better than seeing the great dragon

III

THE FOREIGN DOCTOR

NEXT morning Lo-lo woke up with a dull pain in his head and a loud, hacking cough. He did not feel like rising and they could not coax him to taste even a morsel of his breakfast.

"That's what comes of skating on the ice," said his grandmother. "Now you are in for a spell of sickness."

And she was right about it. His head grew hotter and hotter, and his cough louder and louder. Two days passed and still there was no sign of a change. At last even Mr. Chang grew worried.

Grandmother Chang brought out her book of children's sicknesses. "Let's see," said she, "Lo-lo broke through the ice day before yesterday at five o'clock. That was the Eleventh Moon, the tenth day. Ah, here it is in the book, 'Eleventh Moon, tenth day.' Now, we shall soon find out what to do."

"Nonsense, mother! That silly book is good for nothing. If the boy is really sick, I say let's call in a doctor, not one of our old-fashioned Chinese friends who might punch a hole

in his head with a needle to let out the pain or give him a dose of snakeskin oil mixed with ground oyster-shell. No, not that kind. We'll call in a young Chinese who has been to school, or, how would it do to try one of those foreign doctors and see if he can't cure Lo-lo? Whatever faults those sea-people have, they know how to cure sickness. You remember how that old blind man was cured, and now he can see as well as you or I."

"All right, call in the foreign doctor, if you like," said Grandmother Chang, secretly pleased. "I never have thought they were so bad as people say they are."

"Yes, call him in," said Lo-lo's mother.

So Mr. Chang sent word to the big foreign hospital in a near-by village, asking for the doctor to come and see Lo-lo.

When Lo-lo heard them talking about sending for a foreign doctor, he began to feel better already, for he really was not very sick, and thinking about the white people made him forget the pain in his head.

He had always wanted to see more of the foreigners. Ever since the day when he had seen an American on the street and had talked with him for a minute, he had wanted to have another chance. And now he was going to have his wish. A real foreign doctor would

come to see him, once, maybe twice, and would talk to him. It was almost too good to believe.

He began to wonder what this strange man would look like, whether he would have a beard, as the older men in China do, or whether his face would be clean and white. Would he wear Chinese clothes, as some of the white men did, or the clothes of his own country? Would his finger nails be short, or long and sharp like a Chinaman's? What kind of hat would he wear, and would he take it off in the house? And above all, would he know how to talk?

Lo-lo asked himself these and many other questions as he lay waiting. My! but wouldn't he have strange things to tell Ta-ta and the others! They would stand around in wonder at his story. After all, it was not so bad to be sick for a few days if his father would always call in a white man doctor. It was better than going to the Punch and Judy show or seeing the great dragon carried through the streets at the holiday season. It must be even better than a visit to the wonderful Zoo at Peking, the one the teacher had told the children about at school.

Just then his heart almost stopped beating, for he heard a strange voice in the next room. "Where is the little boy?" it said.

"Oh, here he is," said Grandmother Chang.

Then the door opened, and in walked the foreign doctor. It was not a man at all, but a very tall woman with a very high hat.

She came in and sat down beside his bed, and took his hand in hers. "Ah, the poor little fellow has a fever and such a deep cough. How long has he been ill?"

Grandmother Chang told about the skating party and the breaking of the ice.

"No wonder he is ill," said the young lady, "but it is nothing very bad, and he will soon be up again. If you had waited much longer though, I am not so sure about it. These deep colds in the throat sometimes change into" —and then she gave a strange name that Lo-lo had never heard.

He stared at her in big-eyed surprise.

"Is this the first time you have ever seen one of us?" she asked him with a merry laugh. "It's as good as going to a show, isn't it?"

"Oh, no," gravely, "you aren't the first one, only the other was a man."

"Where did you see this man?" she questioned.

Then he told her about hearing a stranger talking to the people, and how the man had given him a piece of foreign candy.

"Are you the boy who asked him what his

pockets were for?" asked the lady, laughing. "That was my father, and he hasn't forgotten you yet. Why, I have known you a long while, haven't I?"

Soon she was ready to go. After speaking a few words with Lo-lo's mother, she turned once more to the boy: "Now, Lo-Lo, since we are old friends, is there anything you would like to have me bring you to-morrow when I come, some foreign candy, a foreign toy, or perhaps a foreign picture book?"

"No, there is nothing," he said after a moment's thought. "Only if it's not too much trouble, will you please tell me when your Christmas comes and about those strange trees you bring into the house to put gifts on?"

"Gladly," she answered. "You are surely not hard to please. I fear most foreign boys would have said, 'Yes, please bring me some candy, toys, and books,' if I had asked them what they wanted."

After a farewell smile and a light tap on his flushed cheek, she went away.

IV

FOREIGN MEDICINE

"WHAT! you say they sent a woman?" said Mr. Chang when he had heard about the doctor's visit.

"Yes, and the boy's better already," answered Grandmother Chang. "She hadn't more than looked at him when he began to improve. Here is the medicine in these two cups of water. He takes one spoonful an hour from one cup and then a spoonful from the other."

"You don't mean it! Is that all the medicine he has to eat? Why, when I was a boy we ate medicine by the quart instead of the spoonful. I thought these foreigners would feed it to you by the gallon."

"Yes, and she says he has been eating too much. Pork and other meat is bad for him. People with fever mustn't eat. Give him all the hot water he can drink, but no tea."

"Queer, queer! these foreign ways."

But Lo-lo didn't worry about the medicine or because they would not give him any pork for his dinner. He thought only of the tall

white lady with the strange light-coloured hair.

"What makes her hair so funny?" he asked his mother. "It's not black at all like yours, and it looks as if she had never combed it."

"Yes, that's just it," replied Mrs. Chang. "They say that these sea ladies never comb their hair and it grows lighter and lighter all the time. Some say that if they would comb it every day as we do and take good care of it, it would grow as glossy and black as ours. But they are all alike. Not one of them slicks down her hair. I have seen five and they are all alike, every one of them wear it all in a fluff."

But Lo-lo liked the lady doctor in spite of her light fluffy hair and her blue eyes, liked her because she had a soft, sweet voice and was so gentle when she spoke to him. He even thought it a lucky thing to be sick, for being sick had brought her to his side.

"I surely am glad that ice broke," he said to Ta-ta, "for if I hadn't got wet I never should have seen the foreign lady."

"What's she like?" questioned Ta-ta, breathless.

"Oh, like that lovely lady in the temple, that we prayed to when the baby was sick. You remember, the one they call Kwanyin."

"Yes, yes," said Ta-ta, "the one with a thousand hands. If it hadn't been for her, mama says I wouldn't have been born."

"Well, how is Lo-lo to-day?"

He awoke with a start. It was the next morning. The lady doctor was sitting by his side, her hand on his forehead.

"Ah, no fever this morning. That's much better. You'll soon be running round again. Now, what was that question you asked about Christmas?"

"I asked when Christmas comes and what it's for. Why do you have a tree, and what do you do with the things that are on it? What—"

"Just wait a minute, Lo-lo; one question at a time, please. Christmas comes next Saturday, just six days from to-day. We have a tree because we think it is pretty, and it is a good thing to hang our presents on. We put gifts on for all our friends, to show them that we love them. Christmas is the day of love. It is the birthday, you know, of the greatest and best man that ever lived, the man who loved everybody in the world. Here is a little song our children sing. It is printed in Chinese on this card. It tells you all about Christmas Day. You can get your father to read it to you."

Lo-lo picked up the card and began to read off the words very quickly.

"Good! you won't need your father's help. What a bright boy you are! It took me almost a day to learn to read that song, and you read it right off in a jiffy. The music is like this."

She sang it to him, going over and over the simple air until Lo-lo, without being asked, joined in and began to sing it with her. Next he sang it by himself, and she clapped her hands at hearing him.

"I must be going now, Lo-lo. If you need me again be sure to send word. Here is a picture book for you to look at, and I think you'll find some good stories in it, too."

She was gone. He heard his grandmother and his mother in the next room urging her to drink a cup of tea. Then they walked with her to the outer court.

"I wonder what makes her so good to me," he thought. "Are all foreigners like that? If they are, I wonder why Ta-ta's mother calls them 'sea devils.' "

Soon he began to dream about the lady doctor, for his eyes had shut and he was asleep once more.

V.

LO-LO'S WISH

When Lo-lo woke up, he reached for the new book. The first picture he came to made him scream with delight. It was of a real sure-enough Christmas tree, a foreign tree loaded with presents, and under it stood a group of merry children looking at their toys. All of the children seemed very happy. They were dressed in strange-looking clothes. A little brown dog was playing in one corner with a kitten. It was a pretty scene. Lo-lo gazed at it for a long time. "Look, grandma," he said to the old lady. "Was your tree as pretty as this one?"

"Just like it," she said with a smile. "Do you really want to go and see a Christmas tree at the foreign children's house, Lo-lo? Perhaps I can get your father to let you go."

"No, grandma, I don't believe I want to."

"What! you don't want to go? What has made you change your mind so suddenly?"

"Because I want to have a tree all my own, a real Christmas tree, and have the other Chinese children come. That would be lots better than *going* to a tree."

"Hear the boy! A tree of your own! That's a foreign custom. What do we Chinese know about such things?" said his mother. "Next thing you'll be wanting to go to a foreign school and study English."

"Perhaps I shall," he answered. "Do you think papa will let me have the tree?"

"I fear not," said Grandma Chang. "Your father hasn't much use for the white people except when he wants a doctor. Then he thinks they're all right."

However, Lo-lo determined to ask him.

"A Christmas tree in this house! What a queer boy you are, Lo-lo!" his father said. "I told you I would give you anything you wanted, because you had been sick, but I didn't once think it would be that kind of present. The foreign doctor must have been talking to you."

"Yes, she said Christmas would be next Saturday. If all the American children have Christmas trees, why can't I? They're no better than I am. You said so yourself. Please let me have a tree."

"Next thing you'll be wanting to cut your cue and wear one of those stiff white bands around your neck."

"But you said I could have anything I

wanted, and now you won't even give me a little cedar tree."

"Where would you get your tree?"

"From the graveyard, of course. You said they were growing up too thick there and some of them would have to be cleared out anyhow."

"So I did, boy; you're quite right, and I suppose if you insist I must let you have one of them. Why don't you wait until Chinese New Year for your fun?"

"That's too far away. Mother said to-day that it's more than a month, and besides a Christmas tree must come on Christmas, and Christmas comes next Saturday."

"Very well, then. Tell old Wu to send the coolie out for the tree. Mind you don't take one of the big trees. That would cause no end of trouble, you know."

"Yes indeed," said Grandmother Chang, "for every old tree has a fairy in it, and you must not do the fairies any harm."

VI

MAKING PLANS

THE next day Lo-lo had forgotten all about his illness. He went to see Ta-ta, and the two of them began to make plans for the Christmas tree.

"Now, you see," said Lo-lo, "they cut the tree, bring it into the house, and then put all the pretty things on it. All the children stand around it and look on."

"But what children shall you have?" asked Ta-ta. "I suppose you will have to do without."

"It wouldn't be any fun to have a tree if we didn't have children. Grandma says they always have children. That's what it's for mostly, to give the kiddies a good time. Now if we should go to all this trouble and just invite ourselves, it would be foolish. Of course there's your little sister."

"Yes, she can come, but she's only six and small for her age."

"That's no matter. Now, about the others. Who shall they be? Why, of course, let's ask old Wu's boys, and the other servants have children. They will be glad to come."

"Shall we ask them now?"

"Of course not. We'll write out sure-enough letters asking them to come, just the way the grown folks do when they want you to come to a funeral or a wedding."

"Who'll do the writing?"

"I will, 'cause I'm the one who is going to give the tree, but you can help if you want to, and I'll let you pass them round."

"Where did you learn to write invitations?" asked Ta-ta.

"At school after we are through with the main lessons the teacher tells us how to write letters and do some other things. It's not hard at all when you know how. Some of the boys have learned how to draw, too. They can make pictures of the sea, and pagodas, and all kinds of things."

"I wish I could go to school," said Ta-ta, enviously. "Papa says there's no use in my learning more than he learned. He didn't go to school when he was a boy, and he doesn't want me to get ahead of him. He says he wouldn't have any face if his boy knew how to read when he doesn't know anything except counting and money words."

"The Eleventh Moon, eighteenth day, will be Christmas. Your children are respectfully

invited to shed light upon my Christmas tree. Lo-lo bows the head. No. 8 Pig Foot Lane."

"There, don't you think that note will do for old Wu's children?" said Lo-lo, with a last wave of the ink brush.

He folded the sheet of red paper with great care. "That's the way to ask to a wedding, and it ought to be good enough for a Christmas tree."

"Yes, indeed," replied Ta-ta, warmly. "You do know lots, Lo-lo."

Soon Lo-lo had written three copies of his note, for other friends, and had read all of them aloud to Ta-ta. They were all alike, but that made no difference. He was proud of his letter-writing.

"Now let's give old Wu his note and tell him to take it home when he goes to-night."

"All right, let's do."

So, hand in hand, they rushed round to the servants' quarters, where they found old Wu getting a duck ready to be boiled.

"Here is a note for you," said Lo-lo gravely, holding out one of the red invitations.

"A note for me?" repeated old Wu. "What have I been doing? Yes, this is my name," looking it over carefully. "No mistake about it, and it has the place where I live, so I sup-

pose it's mine. But what is it for? I am afraid it's some joke."

"Read and see," laughed Lo-lo.

"My name, I know, and the place where I live, but more than that I can't read, for I'm not a scholar. I'll have to call Li-nan to read it for me. He has had no little schooling.

Li-nan was the wash-man, and after he had looked at the sheet for a long time, twisting his face into a hundred wrinkles, he began to read it off.

When he read the words, "Lo-lo bows the head," the cook turned to the boys with a laugh. "Why, this letter is from you."

"Yes, from me, and I want you to let all your children come."

"Let them come, very well, but what is the meaning of *Christmas* tree? Is it a tree for them to climb, some new game that you will play?"

"Don't ask too many questions," said Lo-lo, "but come and see."

The shuttlecock ball was made of snake's skin and was very hard

entirely nonsense.

VII

AT SCHOOL

NEXT day Lo-lo went back to school. He had been absent several days because of his sore throat. He reached the building at half-past six, for the children started work at seven.

Many other boys were on the school grounds. When they saw Lo-lo, all of them crowded around him, for they had heard of his sickness and about the coming of the foreign doctor.

"Did she know how to talk?" asked one little fellow. "Could she speak real words like ours, or was it just those funny sounds that most of the foreigners make when they open their mouths?"

This little boy had come to Lo-lo's village from a seaport where there were many people from other lands.

"She talked just as we do," answered Lo-lo, "only sometimes her words had different sounds. One thing she said almost made me laugh."

"What was that?" asked the boys in chorus.

"When she meant to say, 'Now, Lo-lo, you

have no more fever,' she really said, 'Lo-lo, you have no hot cakes.' "

All the boys laughed loudly at this and for some time they kept Lo-lo busy answering questions about the strange woman doctor with the white hair.

"Did she have real teeth?" asked the little fellow from the seaport.

At this question all the others laughed, for they thought it very silly.

"Well, you needn't laugh. My mother used to do sewing for a white lady in Chefoo, and one day she went into the lady's bedroom while she was taking a nap. There on the shelf near the bed, what do you think she saw in a glass of water?"

None of the boys could guess.

"A set of teeth. When my mother talked to her she could hardly speak. It sounded as if she had a mouth full of millet. When she got up, she reached over and took the teeth out of the glass. They were all fastened together on something that looked like a red bone. She took the whole handful of teeth and popped them into her mouth. Click! they were there in place, just like real ones. When she talked next time, her voice didn't sound queer any more. She told mother they were *false* teeth, and that a kind of doctor made

them for her and fastened them on to the red bone."

"I guess all the foreigners have teeth that come out, then," said one small boy who had listened with open mouth. "They all talk alike and eat the same kind of food."

"Perhaps they do," said another, laughing.

As it was a beautiful winter day, almost like spring time, and there were still a few minutes before school, the boys began to play one of their favourite games. It was played with a small ball into which were stuck several duck's feathers The ball was made of snake's skin and was very hard. It was somewhat like the shuttle-cock used in the old English game.

Each boy tried to see how long he could keep the ball in air by kicking it with the side of his foot. Some of them were very quick and showed great skill in knocking the feathered ball high above their heads. Sometimes it flew the wrong way like a foul in base-ball and then there was much laughter.

While they were playing in this way, Mr. Chu, the teacher, stood by, watching them. He was a very solemn man who never smiled. The boys were much afraid of him. He was not a good teacher, nor was he a good man. He wore large glasses which were twice the

size of those that people wear in Western lands. The frames of these glasses were made of stone instead of silver, nickel, or gold. Mr. Chu was very near-sighted, but he did not want the boys to know that he was nearly blind, so he stood watching the game of shuttlecock as if he could really enjoy the fun.

All of a sudden one of the boys who had been keeping the ball up in the air tried to make a difficult play. He struck the ball with his heel by mistake, and it flew far to one side. Whack! it struck the teacher right upon the nose. Most of the boys were too much frightened to laugh, but one or two, Lo-lo among them, could not keep from letting out a titter.

This made Mr. Chu very angry and, reaching out, he seized Lo-lo by the cue and pulled him into the schoolroom.

"You rascal," said he, "now you may go without your dinner, and if you miss one word of your lesson this morning I shall give you a beating."

This was too much for Lo-lo. He began to cry. He cried, not because of losing his dinner, but because the teacher had taken hold of him by the cue. All of the boys thought this very bad treatment. They disliked their teacher very much, for he was not by any means a gentleman.

After Lo-lo had dried his eyes he remembered what the master had said and began to study very hard. He was learning to repeat the words, line after line, of a famous Chinese book. This book was for many years given to all Chinese children when they first began to study. It is called in Chinese by this funny name, "San Tzu Ching," which means, "Three Word Classic."

Many other boys were studying this book, and instead of keeping as still as a mouse, each one was reading aloud or saying off in sing-song voice the words of this Chinese primer. It seemed as if each one was trying to shout out his lesson in a louder voice than any of the others.

One by one they stood in front of the teacher, with their backs turned toward him, instead of their faces, and repeated their lesson. You see, the teacher was afraid, perhaps, that they would look on his book if they stood with their faces in his direction. It was nearly dinner time when it came Lo-lo's turn to recite. The boys had not done well and the teacher was angry.

"What is the matter with you to-day, little blockheads, that not one of you knows your lesson? Have you gone crazy? I shall have

to forbid your playing any games and make you come to school much earlier."

The boys were not afraid that the teacher would punish them in this way, for he was lazy and they knew he would not want to come to school any earlier in the morning.

At last Lo-lo stood up to say his lines.

"Now, mind what I told you," said the teacher, frowning. "I meant every word of it. If you make one mistake, you go without your dinner." He had forgotten all about the beating.

But Lo-lo did not make a mistake. In a high sing-song voice he went through every line, from the beginning to the end of the lesson, and said them so fast that the teacher gasped in wonder and looked up to see if the boy had a book hidden somewhere in front of him.

When Lo-lo had finished, the teacher could not find one word of fault.

"Please, elder born," said Lo-lo gravely, "I have said all the words of my lesson, but I don't know the meaning of one of them."

"No matter," said Mr. Chu, "no matter. The meaning will come soon enough."

So Lo-lo had to go home without knowing the meaning of his lesson, for this was before the time when good schools for children were started in China. On the way home from

school Lo-lo was the hero of the hour. Several of the boys walked with him, and at last he told some of them about his Christmas tree. Of course, all of them pricked up their ears when he was talking about this, for they had never heard of such a thing before.

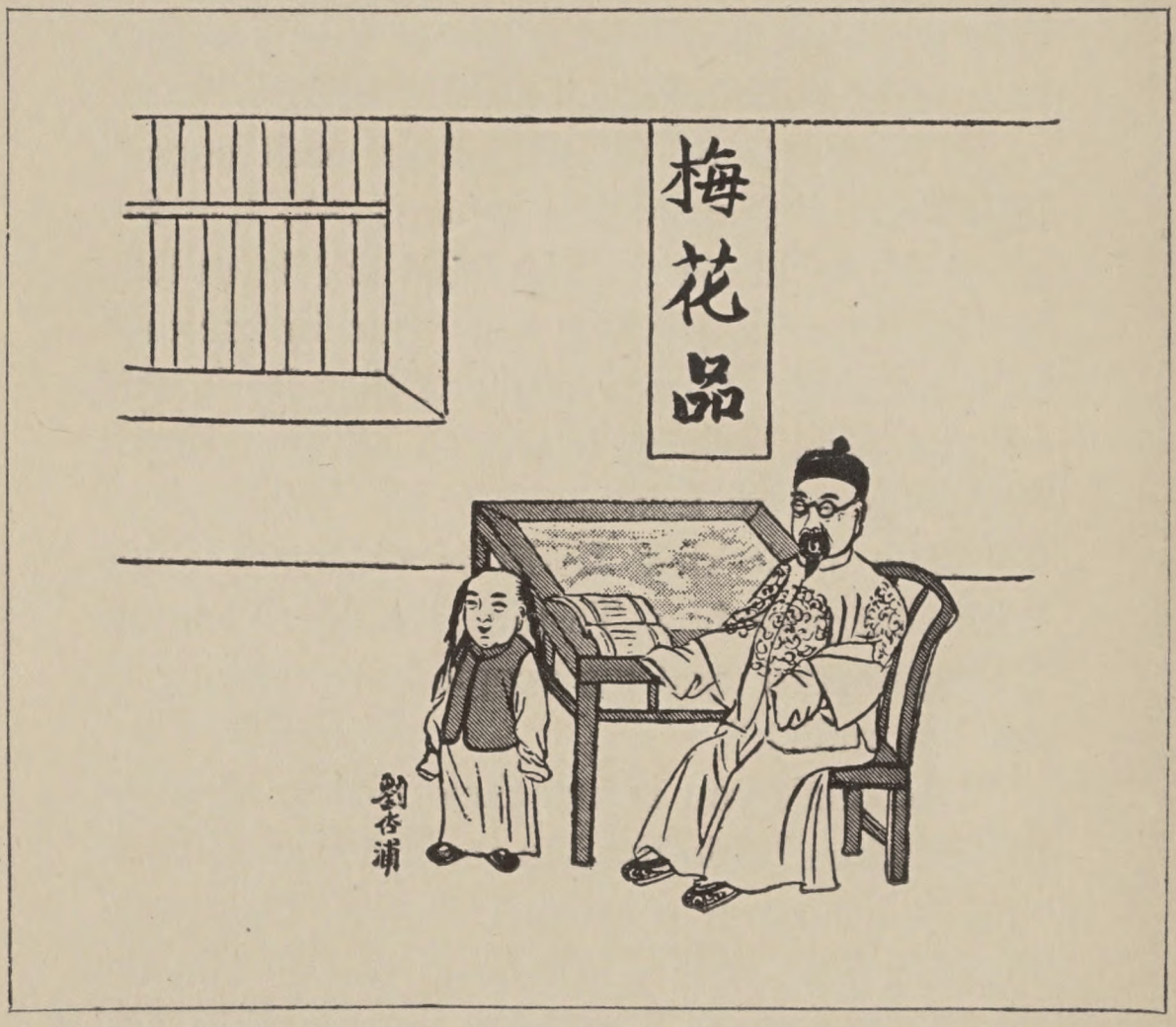
"I think all of us schoolboys will come," said one of them at last when Lo-lo had finished telling about the gifts and had left them.

"Better wait till you get your invitation," said another. "Ta-ta told me that Lo-lo and he had been writing letters to all the friends they wanted to ask."

"Why is it that Lo-lo is always playing with that poor boy, Ta-ta? He doesn't know a single word, and his people have nothing to eat but millet."

"Oh, don't you know, they used to be playmates when Lo-lo lived in the little mud house, and he has never forgotten Ta-ta. They were together that time when Lo-lo was lost in the wheat, and the old woman caught them and made them work for her."

"Yes, and now everything that Lo-lo does, he must ask Ta-ta to help him, and to be his chum."



In a high-pitched voice he went through to the end of the lesson

VIII

LO-LO EXCITED

WHEN Lo-lo reached home he told his mother and his grandmother about all the things that had happened during the morning.

"I am afraid you were very rude, my boy, to laugh at the teacher."

"How could I help it, grandma, when the ball struck him right on the nose? He looked so funny, I think I should have laughed if it had been the Emperor himself."

"Yes, and then you would have had your head chopped off, and—"

"And I couldn't have my Christmas tree," broke in Lo-lo, finishing the sentence. "I don't want my head cut off until after Christmas anyhow."

"Oh, that reminds me, your father said that he would let you stay away from school this afternoon. He thinks, if you are going to have a Christmas tree, you'd better have a good one. This afternoon you'll have to take old Wu along with you to the city. There you can pick out your Christmas presents and bring them home to put on the tree."

Lo-lo was so excited at thought of going to the city that he could hardly eat his dinner. It seemed to him as if he were the luckiest boy in the village. For among all his school friends he had not found one who knew anything about Christmas or whose father had promised him a Christmas tree.

After dinner he rushed over to tell Ta-ta about the afternoon trip to the city and to make him promise to go also. What the schoolboys had said was true. He never liked to do anything without the help of his playmate. If Ta-ta was happy, he was happy, and if Ta-ta cried, Lo-lo did also.

When Lo-lo reached Ta-ta's street he saw that a great crowd of people were standing out in the road in front of the house. Ta-ta and his little sister were there, hand in hand.

"What are you looking at?" asked Lo-lo, for he could see nothing but a great cloud of dust in the distance and thought that a cart was drawing near.

"Camels," shouted Ta-ta.

"Where?"

"Why, don't you see yonder in the street?"

Now, Lo-lo had never seen a camel, but he had often looked at the picture of one in his reader, and he had heard his father say that camels often passed their house in the

night. Once late at night when he was sick he had heard a tinkle of strange bells and his mother had told him that a herd of camels was passing the house. He had been too sick to get up and look, and besides he had heard so many stories about the camel drivers that he was afraid of them.

At last the strange animals came by. There were twenty of them in all.

"Why are they traveling in the daytime?" said Ta-ta. "My father says that camels are not allowed to travel while it is light because they scare the mules and the donkeys."

"See how slowly they walk," shouted Lo-lo. "There is one man for every seven of them."

"Yes, father says they go only two miles an hour, when they are taking trips across the desert, and most of them don't carry more than one hundred and seventy pounds of goods if they are going on a long journey."

When the last camel had passed and the people had returned to their work, Lo-lo and Ta-ta were left alone.

"I am going to the city," said Lo-lo, "and you must go with me."

"What for?"

"To buy presents for the tree. We can have lots of fun."

"But I haven't any money," replied Ta-ta wistfully. "I'd like to go, but there's no use if I haven't any money."

"Nonsense, Ta-ta! I don't want you to buy anything. I've enough for both of us. Papa promised me ten thousand cash to spend for the tree, and we shall have a great time."

"Ten thousand cash! My! that's almost as much as papa makes in a month when he is working."

"Come along and we'll try to get through to-day."

"But, aren't you going to school?"

"No school for me. I had enough of it this morning for one day and father said I might stay at home."

"Aren't you afraid to go into the city all alone?"

"Old Wu will go with us to carry the basket. Hurry up and get ready. You can't find any reason for not going; so come along."

IX

THE NODDING TIGER

As the two boys walked through the village with old Wu on their way to the city, they saw many things to interest them. Just outside the city gate was a large market where eggs and chickens were sold. On one side, as they passed by, they saw an old blind story-teller with a crowd of people around him. Sometimes the man would play on a strange looking kind of fiddle, and then when many people were ready and waiting he would tell them a fairy story of the long ago.

They stopped a moment to hear what he was saying, and heard him tell a story about a wonderful tiger that had killed an old woman's son. "Afterwards the tiger was arrested, and the judge asked him if he had killed a man. He nodded his head gravely, much to the surprise of all the people.

"Then the judge told him he must take care of the old woman now that her son was gone, give her food and money, for she had no relatives to take care of her.

"The tiger nodded his head, then left the

court room. The next morning the old woman found the body of a deer outside her door. Ever after that, as long as she lived, the tiger took care of her, and when she died he mourned at her grave, and had a big stone built there."

As the boys walked through the gate, they were so much interested in this tiger story that they almost forgot why they had come to the city.

"Hey, boys, where are you going?" asked a well-known voice. It was Mr. Chang, Lo-lo's father.

"We have come to buy our presents," said Lo-lo.

"Ready, eh? Very well, come to my shop and I'll give you the money I promised you."

The boys turned down a side street and followed Mr. Chang towards his dye-shop. Old Wu came on behind.

The street was called "Bean Curd Lane," and it was just like many other Chinese streets. Many long sign-boards were hanging in front of the shops. Lo-lo read out some of the names to Ta-ta: "The Golden Cow"—this was a place where they sold needles; "The Black Monkey"—a cap store; "The Mutton Shop of Morning Twilight"—a meat shop.

Many of the places they passed were filled

with people eating. Men were standing in front rolling out dough into little cakes, frying meat, or turning over pancakes that were sizzling over the fire. The air was full of smells that little American boys would think very queer.

All the people who were eating at the tables inside seemed happy, and every one of them had just in front of him a cup of tea.

Lo-lo and Ta-ta did not think any of these sights strange. They read the names of the shops without laughing and went past "Bean Curd Lane," "Sheep Tail Lane," "Donkey Lane" and "Trouser Lane," without so much as a smile, on their way to Mr. Chang's place of business.

Although they did not think the sights strange, for they had seen them before, still they were happy at being in the city again, happy to see so many people, to hear so many loud noises, and to smell so many good things cooking in the eating-houses.

Sometimes they had to wait a long while for two carts to pass each other where the road was narrow, or for a long line of wheelbarrows loaded with stone to get out of their way.

Then, again, when there were too many men in his way, and Mr. Chang wished to

get by quickly, he would call out, "Borrow light! borrow light!" and those who were in his path would step aside and let man, boys and servant pass on.

This was not strange to Lo-lo either. He would never have thought of saying such a strange thing as, "Excuse me," or, "Pardon me, if you please," or anything else which a little English boy or an American might have said in a crowd.

X

TA-TA'S ACCIDENT

After a while they reached Mr. Chang's shop. It was a place for weaving and dyeing cloth. Out in front, hanging from a pole high up in the air were long strips of newly dyed cloth. These pieces had been put out to dry.

The boys went inside. There were several small rooms. All of these were full of men and boys who were at work. When Mr. Chang entered, these men began working harder than ever.

Lo-lo had seen them many times before, and was not so much interested in what they were doing as he would have been if it had been his first visit.

Ta-ta had never been in a dye-shop. He went from room to room, poking his nose into every corner.

At last Lo-lo heard a loud scream. He turned around just in time to catch hold of Ta-ta's leg and save him from falling head over heels into a great tub of green dye which was standing at one side of the room.

As it was, the boy's hands were covered with the green stuff, and his face was badly

spattered. He was a funny-looking object, and Lo-lo burst into shouts of laughter. All the workmen also began to laugh, and Mr. Chang came out of a back room which he used as an office to see what was the trouble.

After they had finished laughing at Ta-ta's misfortune, a servant brought in a pan of water and some soap, but it was no use trying —the dye was on to stay, and he could not wash it off.

"You see, Ta-ta, if you don't want to be a green-handed boy, you'd better not play in my dye," laughed Mr. Chang. "My dye is not the cheap colouring that comes off in the first rain. That stuff will stay on there till after the New Year."

"Yes, I can use Ta-ta to help decorate the Christmas tree," said Lo-lo. "He's lots prettier now than anything we can buy."

"Now,'" said Mr. Chang, after they had gone into his office, "I believe I promised Lo-lo a thousand cash to help him buy things."

"A thousand cash!" shouted Lo-lo. "No, sir, it was *ten* thousand."

"*Ten* thousand! What? How do you expect a poor man like me to give you all that money?"

Mr. Chang always liked to speak of himself as a poor man. It had been only a short time

since he really was poor, and he liked to hear people say, "Oh no, Mr. Chang is a great man; he is rolling in money." He liked to repeat the old Chinese saying, "Men honor the rich—even dogs bite those with ragged clothes."

After joking with his son a little longer, Mr. Chang sent a servant into the next room to bring the money. It was wrapped in a newspaper, ten rolls in all. Each piece of money was almost as large as a fifty-cent piece, and there were five hundred coins. Each coin was called a twenty-cash piece. It made a heavy load. Instead of having the boys carry it in pockets or purses, Mr. Chang told old Wu to put it into his basket and carry it to the shop where the boys would do their buying.

"Now be sure you stay with old Wu," cautioned Mr. Chang, just as they were going. "Getting lost in the city would be worse for you youngsters than going astray in a wheat-field, and you know there are many old women that might like to steal you."

"I guess they would," answered Lo-lo, "if they could steal our servant with us and get the money."

Turning out of Mr. Chang's street, they went into "Blackbird Lane," and soon reached

the store where they expected to buy toys for children. Lo-lo had been there before and knew the shop-keeper very well.

"What are you looking for to-day, my boy?" asked the clerk, smiling. "Your friend here must be one of your father's workmen." As he said this he pointed to Ta-ta's green hands.

"No, he just tried to wash his face in the dye," said Lo-lo, "and we wouldn't let him."

In the shop were many kinds of animals. Some of them were made of cloth, others of china. There were some tiny little fellows, so small that the boys had to hold them close to their eyes to see what they were. They were made of silk.

"We'll get one of these animals for every child," said Lo-lo, after asking the price, "and when the Christmas tree is over, we can have an animal show."

There were many kinds of false faces which the boys thought very odd. They tried several of them on, and at last bought ten.

Some Japanese blocks and games also drew their eyes, besides a host of toys which they had seen many times before. It was not long until old Wu's basket was more than half full.

"We must get some paper of different colors

when we pass the bookstore on the way back," said Lo-lo.

"What will you do with paper?" said old Wu.

"I'll show you after we get home. Have no fear. And we must be sure not to forget the fruit. Grandma says they give an orange to every child. I think persimmons will do just as well, and they are only twenty cash apiece."

They went to a fruit store and bought a number of big yellow persimmons. Each of these was at least ten inches around and weighed almost a pound.

"I wish we didn't have to wait till Christmas," said Ta-ta.

"All right, have one now. I'm going to eat one, too."

So they started home, each one eating a persimmon as he trudged along the crowded street.

"We mustn't forget to buy some ankle bands for the servants," whispered Lo-lo, as they came near to the city gate. He did not want old Wu to hear him talking. He had taken some money from the basket before leaving the toy shop.

At the gate he told Wu that Ta-ta and he were tired, and that they would come soon, that he need not wait for them. By this time

they knew the way home from the city gate and were not afraid to go by themselves. It was not a long distance.

When old Wu had left them, they stopped in front of a street peddler who had many little things for sale. From this man they bought five long bands of cloth such as Chinese men and women use for tying their trousers at the ankles.

When they were nearing Ta-ta's house, Ta-ta's little sister ran out to meet them.

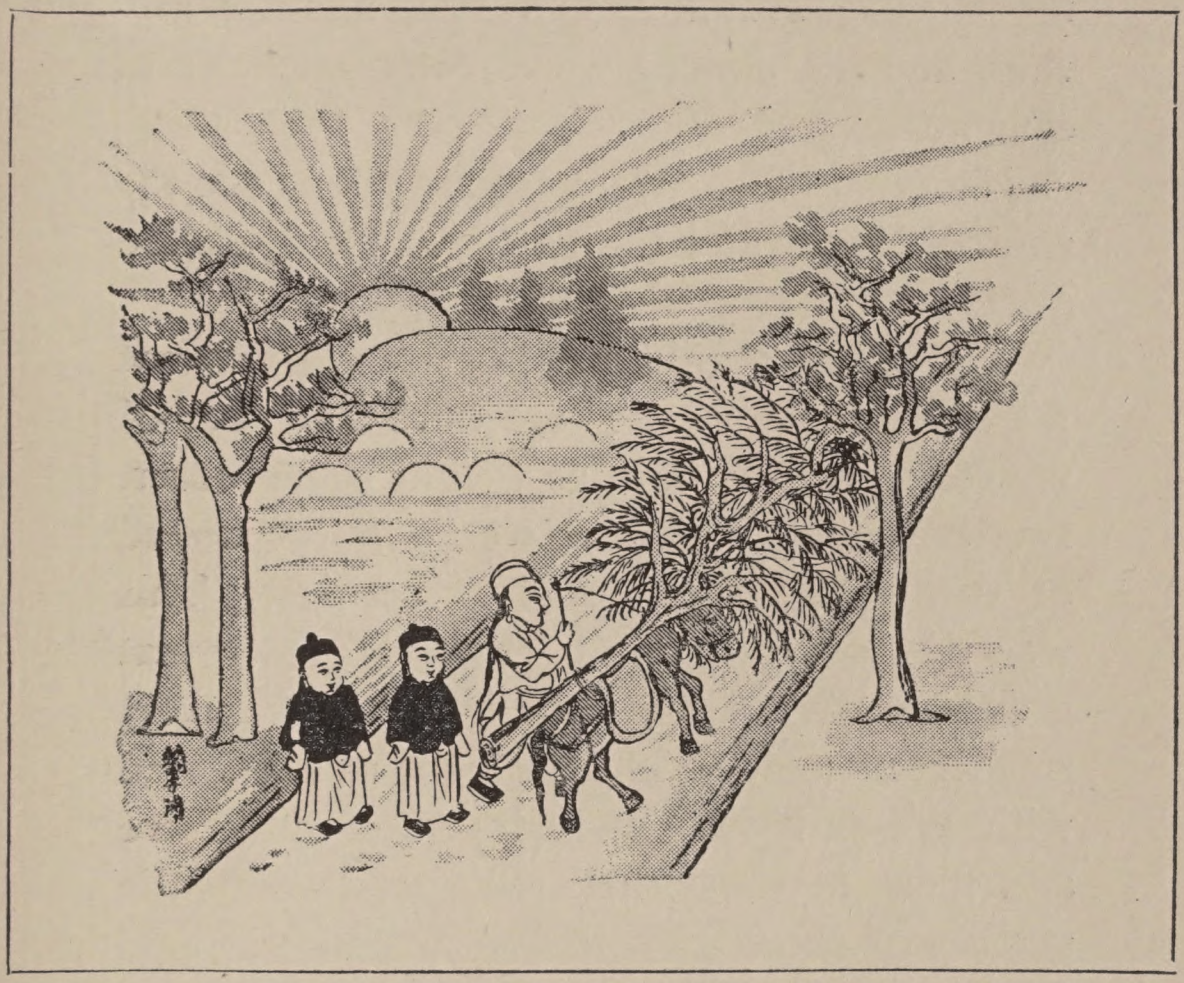
At sight of her brother's green hands and the green spots on his face, she cried out, "Oh, brother eats so many cabbage leaves that he will soon turn into a cabbage."

"And then you can eat him, can't you?" asked Lo-lo. "Now, Ta-ta," he went on, "be sure to come over to my house to-morrow afternoon. I want you to go to the graveyard with me."

"Go to the graveyard? What are you going to do there?"

"Don't ask too many questions. What grows in a graveyard? Christmas trees. Don't you see, that's where we're going to get our tree."

"All right," said Ta-ta, as Lo-lo walked away, "I'll come. I like to go after green things, you know. I'll be there, sure."



The sun was just setting as they started home

XI

CUTTING THE TREE

THE next day Lo-lo could hardly recite his lessons, he was so impatient to start to the burying ground. Old Wu, another servant, and the donkey were ready when Ta-ta came.

The two boys were soon piled on the animal's back, and the party was off for the graveyard.

The Chang family burying ground was not far from the house. There were a number of tall trees growing in it, as well as some cedars. In the center of the lot was a large mound of earth shaped like a giant beehive. This was the grave of one of Lo-lo's great great grandfathers. Around the hillock were many smaller mounds. The ground was covered with grass, brown and almost dead. Here and there in some sheltered spots were little patches of snow. There was no fence around the lot, and on all sides wheat had been planted.

"Well, which tree will you have?" said old Wu. "Here are three small ones. You will have to choose."

Lo-lo looked at the trees carefully. At last he decided, for one of the trees was much more shapely than the others, and the color was a brighter green.

"This one is just right," he said. "Cut it down."

So the two men went to work with their axes, and at last the tree fell to the ground with a swish.

The boys clapped their hands with delight and helped the servants tie it to the donkey's back. The sun was just setting as they started home.

"Jump on, Ta-ta," shouted Lo-lo. "We'll take turns riding."

It was an odd sight, and many men stopped to look back at them as they passed.

It was dark when they reached home with the tree. This was just the way they had wished it to be. Now none of the boys in the neighborhood would see it. They bade the servants say nothing about their afternoon's work to any one.

They unloaded the donkey in an inner court in Lo-lo's yard. The tree was left there until they should be ready to set it up.

"Now, grandmother," said Lo-lo that night, "I have everything ready, the tree and the presents. I have bought paper to decorate it with and fruit to put around the bottom or hang on with pieces of string. Now, I want you to tell me all about the other tree, the one you went to. What did the children do?

Who gave them the presents? Tell me all you know about it."

So Grandmother Chang sat for a long while talking to Lo-lo. Sometimes she had to stop and think, for it had been many, many years since her Christmas tree, but at last she always thought of something more to tell.

It was like a long fairy tale to Lo-lo, only this was every bit true.

"Well," said the boy when she had finished, "I think we can have everything that you had at your tree except those sure-enough blue-eyed foreign dolls with the white hair."

"No, you can't buy such dolls in this city," said grandma. "You'd have to give twice as much money as you have, so there's no use worrying. There is one thing though about that tree I can't remember. I have been puzzling my head all these days, but I can't think what funny thing it was that happened."

"Why, mother, you don't mean to say that you are losing your good memory?" said Mr. Chang, who had been listening to the story as the old woman told it to Lo-lo.

"No, no, son, I'm not losing it, but it's getting very thin around the edge."

"Now, remember," said Lo-lo, "you must be sure to wear your best clothes when you come. They always do that on Christmas. Grandma says so, and so did the lady doctor."

It was the next to the last day before Christmas, and he had called all the children together to tell them about his plans.

"But I haven't any best clothes," said one little fellow sadly. "These are all I have."

"Oh, well, don't cry. I'll lend you a suit. It wouldn't do for you not to wear a best one on that day. All of you boys must meet in the front court and at nine o'clock march into the house. Ta-ta will be the captain. You will come to the door, and I'll welcome you. When you get inside we must sing a Christmas song. I'll teach it to you now and give you the words."

Lo-lo then handed to each of the children a copy of a Christmas song that the doctor had sent over. Then Lo-lo and Ta-ta sang the first line over and over until several of the others could carry the tune, and so on to the end.

"Now, if you'll all learn the words, you can try it once more on Christmas morning just before the time for marching in."

All the children were much excited and begged Lo-lo to tell them what he meant by a Christmas tree. Not one of them had ever heard of such a thing before.

But the two friends kept the secret carefully.

XII

SETTING UP THE TREE

THE next morning very early Lo-lo begged old Wu and the coolie to help him set the tree in place.

"Why not let it lean against the wall in the corner of the large room?" suggested the cook.

"Lean against the wall! well, I think not," answered Lo-lo. "You don't know what it's for, do you?"

"Why not against the wall? That's as good as any place for it don't you think?"

"No, it must stand up just as straight as it did in the graveyard before you cut it down."

"There's no way to fix it straight," said the coolie, shaking his head. "The trunk's too small for it to stand on. It will be sure to topple over. I'll tell you what. Suppose two of us stand here and hold it. How would that do?"

"It wouldn't do at all. It must stand up by itself and be strong too."

"It's too tall to stand up in the room with-

out touching the ceiling," said old Wu at last. "But, of course, the trunk is very long. It could be sawed off a little."

"You crazy men!" said grandma, who had heard them talking. "Do you have to let an old woman tell you how to manage things? Come inside. Bring the tree with you, but don't you cut an inch off the trunk. I'll show you how to set it up on end, and the top won't touch the ceiling either."

"Hurrah!" cried Lo-lo, "Grandma always knows."

They carried the tree into the guest-room.

"Now bring it over here next to the brick bed," said Grandma Chang. "Careful! Don't break the branches. It's a pretty tree, but we mustn't spoil it before Christmas."

Just in front of the bed was a deep hole in the floor, in which a fire was built to keep the bed warm when a guest was sleeping there.

"Stand the tree in that hole," said grandma, "and then fill the hole around it with pieces of wood or bricks."

"Hurrah!" shouted Lo-lo, "just the thing, granny. And it's just as you say, the top won't touch the ceiling."

Soon the pretty tree was standing up again as it had in the grove. Old Wu and the cook wedged it in firmly, so that Lo-lo thought he

could climb into the branches without upsetting it.

"Now," said Grandma Chang, "it will be all ready for you to decorate after school this afternoon. Ta-ta can help you, and, of course, if you want any advice from the old folk, I will tell you all I can."

"You're the best grandma in the whole world," shouted Lo-lo. "I can hardly wait for the time to come."

"I'm afraid you'll miss all your lessons today" said his mother.

"But it's the first Christmas the boy's ever had," answered the old woman, "so it doesn't matter much if he does."

But Lo-lo's mother was right. When he came to recite his lesson, his head was all in a whirl. Some of the words which he had known perfectly seemed to slip out of his memory. When he came to the place where it says, "That boys should not learn, is an improper thing, for if they do not learn in youth what would they do when old," he rattled off, without thinking, "That boys *should* learn is an improper thing, for if they learn in youth what will they do when old."

"Enough," said the teacher crossly. "You have no brains. I'll have to make you start all over again."

But Lo-lo was too happy to worry about the teacher's anger. He held his school book before him, and called out in a loud voice the words as he saw them. He was not thinking of school or the three-word book, but only of the afternoon's fun with Ta-ta, of the morrow when all his friends were coming to the tree.

There would be no school for Lo-lo to-morrow or for the others whom he had invited. A letter had been sent to the teacher asking that they be excused. As these children had no holiday on Saturday, such as children in other lands have, the Christmas holiday would be a great treat.

"Now, be sure not to be too late," said Lo-lo after school was over, to those who were invited, "and try to learn all the words of your song."

XIII

CHRISTMAS EVE

When Lo-lo reached home, on Christmas Eve, he found that his father had sent up a large basket full of things for the tree. There were big butterflies, moths, snails and all sorts of animals cut out of various kinds of paper. While he was looking at these things a basket was brought in, which turned out to be full of fruit sent "To Lo-lo, for his Christmas tree, from the foreign doctor. A Merry Christmas!"

"Isn't my doctor good to me?" he asked his grandmother, after he had read the Christmas greeting. "Let's put the butterflies and paper things on first. They'll make the tree look so bright and pretty."

"Now take this cotton," said Grandma Chang, "and throw little pieces of it on the branches."

She had one of Lo-lo's last winter's coats in her hands. She had ripped it open and taken all the cotton wadding out.

"All right. Here goes," and Lo-lo threw some of the cotton up into the tiptop of the tree. It stuck to the branches and the boys

clapped their hands. Soon they had put it in many places.

Then they began to tie the presents on. They used string which had been woven out of a tough kind of grass by a man in their own village.

Supper-time came but that made no difference, for Ta-ta was going to stay all night.

They were too much excited to eat, and soon had left the table and were standing under the tree again.

"It's more fun than flying kites," said Ta-ta.

"Don't forget the presents for mama and papa," said Lo-lo, "and grandma. Then here is something papa has bought for your father and mother. You can take it to them after we have had the children."

Soon the tree was loaded down with gifts. There were Chinese dolls for the little girls, lovely flowers made of silk and satin, and many other things, while the presents for the boys were so many that Lo-lo could not count them.

Behind the tree they piled persimmons and oranges. It was a pretty sight, this first Christmas tree that had ever been seen in the village, and the first one managed entirely by Chinese, perhaps, in the entire province.

They were wild with delight at sight of it,

and when it was bedtime Lo-lo's mother had to call him three times, for he would gladly have staid up all night to look at the beautiful Christmas tree.

When the children were in bed, the old folk came into the room, for they had caught the Christmas fever too. Soon bright red paper was pasted over the windows so that not a ray of outside light could get in. A large yellow Chinese flag with a big dragon on it was pinned up on the wall, while several large screens and some giant kites shaped like great birds and animals were stood up in various places.

Many Chinese lanterns of paper and glass were hung from the ceiling ready to be lighted in the morning.

"Let's go out now and bar the door. We won't let Lo-lo and Ta-ta in till all the other children have come," said Mr. Chang.

"There's only one thing lacking," said grandma, looking at the beautiful sight.

"What's that, mother?" said Mr. Chang. "If it's not too hard to find, maybe we can get it yet."

"That's just the trouble," she answered. "It is too hard to find. It's the part I can't remember about that first tree."

" Listen Little ones, I am Santa Claus "

XIV

CHRISTMAS MORNING

MORNING came and a beautiful day it was. Lo-lo jumped out of bed with a whoop. "Wake up, Ta-ta. It's Christmas Day. Wake up! Wake up!"

"Come on, let's have a look at the tree," said Ta-ta, after they were dressed and ready for breakfast.

But the door would not open.

"I don't believe we shall either," said Lo-lo, laughing. "They've locked the door to keep us out. We can climb up outside and peep through the window."

They went outside the guest-room and climbed up on an old bench. The windows were made of paper instead of glass, and Lo-lo expected to look in through a hole which had been torn in the paper pane.

"Why, the holes are all covered up," he cried, "with red paper, and I don't dare to punch another. It might make father angry."

Soon the whole family was stirring and a little later breakfast was finished.

"If I weren't so busy I should like to stay for your tree," said Mr. Chang, "but business is business, and I suppose I must go."

Tears came into Lo-lo's eyes, but he said nothing. He had hoped that his father would remain at home that morning instead of going off as usual to the dye-shop.

"Too bad you can't stay," said Grandma Chang. "It would please the children so much."

"Yes, it is too bad," he answered, "but I know they'll have a good time, anyhow."

Just then children's voices were heard outside, a barking of dogs, and an opening and shutting of the gate.

"They've come," shouted Lo-lo, and the two children rushed out to meet the others.

"Oh, I forgot," said Lo-lo, "they're going to march in and I must meet them at the door, for I'm the host to-day."

"Christmas Day has come again,
Come again, come again,
Come across the deep blue sea,
Come to you and come to me.
Drive all pain and care away.
Shout it out—'tis Christmas Day.

"Christmas Day has come again,
Come again, come again,

Day of all the very best,
Day of joy and day of rest.
Christ on the first Christmas morn
Into this old world was born."

Lo-lo met all the children at the door, and as they entered the house he fell in line with Ta-ta and joined in the song. It rang out very loudly on the morning air. As the last sound died away, the door into the Christmas room flew open and they rushed in.

Lo-lo had expected to sing the chorus again, but the words stuck in his throat. All the children gasped with surprise. The room was ablaze with light, and the tree was the most beautiful sight they had ever seen.

They ran around it in wonder, looking first at one thing and then another.

"It must be a dream," said one little girl, "and we're walking in the big palace garden at Peking."

"No dream about this," laughed a boy. "That's a real tree, and I know this is Lo-lo's house, for I've been here before."

"My! aren't those whopping big kites?" said Lo-lo. "Where did they come from? If this *is* my house, I didn't know *they* were here."

"Nor I either," said Ta-ta.

While the children were staring in delight

at the beautiful room, the servants came and stood by the door. They were as much pleased as the children.

Grandmother Chang and her daughter-in-law were sitting in one corner looking on. They had never been happier.

Suddenly they heard some one shouting out in a high squeaky voice, "Well, children, are you glad to see me?"

From behind the great Chinese flag on the wall stepped out a strange figure. It was a man dressed in long flowing garments. On his head he wore a black cap. His long beard was almost as white as the snow outside the door. His cheeks were as red as fire.

As he walked out some of the children were badly frightened and began to cry.

"Listen, little ones. Don't cry," said the stranger. "I am Santa Claus. For many years I have been coming every winter to see the little foreign children. This year for the first time I found out that you had never heard my name. Now, I love children very much and like to have them love me. I live far away in the South, but every year I come on Christmas Day to see that all my young friends have a good time.

"Now, if you children would like to have me come back and pay you another visit, you

must be good boys and girls, you must study hard your 'San Tzu Ching', and above all, try not to forget that Christmas means the day of love. Be sure not to forget my name. It is Santa Claus.

"I am sure you would like to see now what Lo-lo, Ta-ta, and Santa have put on this tree for you. First of all, here is a gift from Santa to Lo-lo, because he has been so thoughtful and has tried to make all his friends have a good time."

Santa Claus then handed down to Lo-lo from the tree a case with a beautiful little silver watch inside, the very kind the boy had been wanting for a long time. On the outside was carved his name.

Lo-lo got down on his knees and touched the floor with his head. All of the others followed his example, for Chinese children are very polite, and they wished to show Santa that they honored and loved him.

Then the children crowded round Lo-lo to look at his gift, and cried out with delight when they saw what a beauty it was.

Santa now began to call out their names in order, and each child stepped up to receive a present. It would have made you laugh to see how low they bowed as they thanked him for his kindness. Some were afraid and hung back

for a minute, but soon all saw that he was truly the children's friend and trusted him.

After all the toys, the sweetmeats, and the fruits had been passed round to the children, the parents were remembered and all the servants. Ta-ta received a fur cap for his father and a warm wadded garment for his mother, besides his own presents.

Never in that village had children been so happy.

The good-bye

XV

THE SILVER WATCH

WHILE the children were busy looking at their gifts, old Santa slipped out of the door and rushed into Mr. Chang's bedroom. He pulled off his white beard, his cap, and some of his outer garments.

"Why, it's my son!" cried old Grandmother Chang. "It's my son dressed up like Santa Claus."

"What! mother, didn't you recognize me? I like to have a good time once in a while. Do you think everything passed off well?"

"It surely did. There was nothing lacking."

"But I thought you said there *was* something that you had forgotten about, something they had at the Christmas tree when you were a little girl."

"Oh, but that was Santa Claus," she answered. "I knew there was something, but I had forgotten what it was. When I saw you standing there dressed in those clothes and wearing that beard, it all came back to me just as if I had been changed to a little girl again. You looked just the way Santa did fifty years

ago except that it seems to me he was a foreigner. How in the world did you find out about him and where did you get those foreign clothes?"

"Oh, I know several of those Americans," he answered, "and they told me all about their customs. I borrowed the beard and the garments from a shop."

"Ah, you like the foreigners better than you used to," she said laughing.

"Yes, they are not so bad as I thought. I sent them a big basket of fruit this morning and some Chinese toys for their children."

"Oh, father's back," shouted Lo-lo. "Just see what a beautiful gift Santa Claus brought me!"

"A silver watch, eh?" said Mr. Chang, smiling. "Now, you'll have no excuse for being late to school."

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17 W

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